

Message Text

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TO USINT CAIRO

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EXDIS

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QUOTE

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EXDIS

DEPT PASS CAIRO; BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

COUNTRY TEAM MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, XF

SUBJ: SAUDI ATTITUDES ON CEASE-FIRE AND AFTER

SUMMARY: SAUDIS RELIEVED AT CEASE-FIRE, BUT ALSO ARE
ALMOST UNIVERSALLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT DURABILITY AND ULTIMATE
MEANING. THEY ARE CONCERNED ESPECIALLY WHETHER SC RES
243 WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN FASHION AGREEABLE TO ARABS.
SAG OFFICIALS REMAIN WELL DISPOSED AT PERSONAL LEVELS
TO US OFFICIALS, BUT WE CANNOT EXPECT THAT SAUDI OIL
PRESSURE WILL DIMINISH UNTIL OUTLINE OF ACCEPTABLE
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SETTLEMENT BECOMES CLEAR; TO SAUDIS JERUSALEM WILL BE
KEY ISSUE. WE CANNOT COUNT ON SAUDIS HELPING TO PRESS
OUR VIEWS ON OTHER ARABS, BUT BY KEEPING FAISAL CONSTANTLY
ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS, WE CAN DIMINISH ANY NEGATIVE

ATTITUDES HE MIGHT OTHERWISE ADOPT TOWARD US POSITION OR DIRECTION IN WHICH PEACE TALKS ARE MOVING. ABOVE ASSUMES CEASE-FIRE WILL HOLD; IF IT DOES NOT, AND ISRAELIS HUMILIATE SADAT, PROSPECTS FOR PERMANENT PEACE SETTLEMENT AND U.S. INTERESTS WILL WORSEN. END SUMMARY

1. IN LAST FORTY-EIGHT HOURS WE HAVE SOUGHT SAUDI VIEWS ABOUT THE CEASEFIRE AND WHAT IS TO COME, VIA TALKS WITH FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS, MILITARY OFFICERS, ROYAL ADVISERS AND TECHNICIANS, AND WITH AMERICANS AND OTHER EXPATRIATES WHO HAVE INTIMATE SAUDI CONTACTS.

2. REACTIONS HAVE BEEN SO UNIFORM WE WOULD ASSUME THEY REFLECTED CAREFULLY COORDINATED GOVERNMENTAL PROPAGANDA EFFORT IN A LESS DISORGANIZED SOCIETY. BUT THIS EXPLANATION FAILS HERE AND WE HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE OPINIONS WE HEAR REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE KING AND THE SENIOR PRINCES. WE ALSO ARE CONFIDENT THAT THEY ARE WIDELY HELD IN THE MIDDLE CLASS, THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE ARMY.

3. APART FROM SOME YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS WHO LOOKED FORWARD TO AN ABSOLUTE ARAB VICTORY AFTER A LONG WAR OF ATTRITION, SAUDIS RELIEVED AT THE CEASE-FIRE. BUT THERE IS ALSO UNIVERSAL SKEPTICISM ABOUT ITS DURABILITY AND ITS ULTIMATE MEANING. THERE IS NO RPT NO JOY AT THE PROSPECT OF SITTING BACK AND LETTING THE GREAT POWERS WORK THINGS OUT--ALTHOUGH THERE IS FULL AWARENESS THAT THEY WOULD BE RELATIVELY HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING TO FRUSTRATE ANY SOLUTION IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION.

4. MOST UNEASE HOVERS OVER THE VARIED STATEMENTS ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 242. THE SAUDIS HAVE THEIR OWN INTERPRETATIONS, I.E. FULL RESTORATION OF THE BORDERS OF JUNE 5, 1976, AND THEY KNOW OUR PREVIOUSLY STATED ONE, I.E. RESTORATION OF THE PRE-WAR BORDERS WITH MINOR BORDER RECTIFICATIONS. BUT THEY HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT WE HAVE
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NOT REPEATED OUR EARLIER VIEWS; WE HAVE SAID NOTHING ABOUT NO TERRITORIAL CHANGES BY FORCE AND THEY HAVE HEARD ISRAEL'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE CEASE-FIRE BASED ON ITS OWN INTERPRETATION OF 242, I.E. RETURN OF SOME OF THE TERRITORIES SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDING GOLAN, GAZA, SHARM AL-SHAikh AND (ESPECIALLY) JERUSALEM.

5. AT PERSONAL LEVEL WE ARE STILL BEING RECEIVED BY SAUDIS AS "FRIENDS" (AND THIS INCLUDES AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN). AMBASSADOR HAS EVEN BEEN INVITED TO SPEND MOSLEUM HOLIDAY (ID AL-FITR) WITH PETROLEUM MINISTER ZAKI YAMANI. WE BELIEVE THIS RELATIVELY FREE CONTACT WILL CONTINUE. SAUDIS ARE CONTAINING THEIR ANGER SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN THEY WERE

A FEW DAYS AGO, BUT WE CANNOT ALLOW THESE RELATIVELY FAVORABLE FACTORS TO LEAD TO ANY OPTIMISTIC CONCLUSION. WE DO NOT EXPECT ANY MODIFICATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE IN THE SAUDI PROGRAM TO RESTRICT OIL PRODUCTION (WHICH WILL BE ABOUT THREE MILLION BARRELS A DAY SHORT OF PROJECTED PRODUCTION IN NOVEMBER) NOR DO WE EXPECT A RAPID LIFTING OF THE BOYCOTT OF THE UNITED STATES.

6. WE DOUBT HOWEVER THAT SAUDIS WILL MOVE ON THEIR LONGER-TERM OPTIONS AGAINST THE U.S. (E.G. FURTHER OIL PRODUCTION CUTS, NATIONALIZATION OF ARAMCO, STOPPING OF OVERLIGHTS, TRANSFER OF FUNDS) AS LONG AS U.S. ACTIVITY TOWARD SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEM IS OBVIOUS--AND IN THIS CASE MOVEMENT MIGHT SUBSTITUTE FOR SUBSTANCE. COLD AND DISTRUSTFUL OFFICIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES WILL PROBABLY CHANGE WHEN THE ISRAELIS START WITHDRAWAL, AND WE BELIEVE WE WILL BE ABLE TO EXPLOIT ANY SIGNS OF U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO MOVE. BUT WE MUST ALSO REALIZE ARABS MAY USE OIL WEAPON AGAIN IF THERE IS SLOWDOWN IN PACE TOWARD PEACE/WITHDRAWAL, OR TO OBTAIN U.S. SUPPORT FOR INTERPRETATION OF SC 242 IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARAB VIEWS.

7. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT DURING SUCH A PERIOD OF INDETERMINATE BUSTLE AMERICAN FIRMS WILL HAVE MUCH CHANCE OF GETTING SAUDI CONTRACTS OR MAKING SALES HERE.

8. KING APPRECIATED BEING INFORMED BY SECRETARY OF IMPENDING SC RESOLUTION AND OF SECRETARY'S TRIP TO ISRAEL
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BEFORE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS. HE ALSO APPRECIATED VERY QUICK RESPONSE TO HIS MOST RECENT LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT. WE HOPE KING'S SENSITIVITIES CAN BE CONSTANTLY BORNE IN MIND AND THAT DEPARTMENT WILL TRY TO INFORM HIM IN ADVANCE OF ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPENDING ACTIONS.

9. WE WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT AS WE HAVE IN THE PAST AND AS WE SUSPECT WILL IN THE FUTURE, THAT THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM IS OF OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE TO THE KING AND THE SAG (AND WE BELIEVE TO MANY EASTERN ARABS). AS ONE SAUDI REMARKED, "IF KISSINGER PULLS OFF A SOLUTION FOR JERUSALEM, THE UNITED STATES WILL WIN BACK EVERYTHING IT LOST SINCE OCTOBER 6." WE BELIEVE WE WOULD WIN THIS BACK AND MORE.

10. CONCLUSIONS: THE SAUDIS UNDERSTAND THEIR MILITARY WEAKNESS BUT ARE INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THEIR POTENTIAL POLITICAL STRENGTH (THROUGH OIL AND MONEY) AND THEY ARE NOT DISCERNIBLY MORE WILLING TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS TO ISRAEL THAN IS THE WILDEST SYRIAN BAATHI. THE UNITED STATES CANNOT COUNT ON SAUDI ASSISTANCE IN GETTING THE STATES CONTIGUOUS TO ISRAEL TO ACCEPT ANY UNPALATABLE PEACE TERMS.

11. THIS SAUDI INTRANSIGENCE, HOWEVER, MIGHT BE MODIFIED IN TIME, PARTICULARLY IF SOME REAL MOVEMENT TOWARD A PEACE ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARABS IS VISIBLE, AND IF WE ARE CAREFUL TO KEEP THE KING APPRISED OF OUR THINKING.

12. THIS IS ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT BECAUSE IF SOVIETS ARE KEEPING SADAT BRIEFED ON STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS AND OF PRESSURES BEING PUT ON ISRAEL TO COMPLY WITH CEASE-FIRE TERMS, WE CAN ASSUME THAT HE WILL INFORM SAUDIS REGARDLESS OF COMMITMENTS HE MAY HAVE GIVEN USSR ON CONFIDENTIALITY. (IT IS LIKELY FAISAL'S VIEWS ON A SETTLEMENT WILL BE AFFECTED MORE BY THOSE OF SADAT THAN BY THOSE OF ANY OTHER ARAB LEADER--OR LEADERS, COMBINED.) IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL FOR US THEREFORE TO BE ABLE TO GIVE FAISAL DIRECTLY OUR VIEWS AND OUR INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ROLE THE SECRETARY AND THE PRESIDENT PLAYED IN BRINGING ABOUT THE CEASE-FIRE AND ANY SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS.

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13. IN THE MEANTIME SAUDI ARABIA WILL BE UNDER NO ECONOMIC PRESSURE TO MOVE. ITS INCOME WILL NOT RISE TO THE SPECTACULAR HEIGHTS WE HAD PREDICTED BEFORE THE WAR STARTED, BUT THE RECENT PRICE INCREASES MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR THE PRODUCTION CUTS. ITS INCOME WILL RISE TO \$7 BILLION NEXT YEAR AND ITS BUDGETARY SURPLUS WILL PROBABLY EXCEED \$4 BILLION--EVEN WITH PRODUCTION LEVELS FROZEN AT 6.5 MB/D.

14. THE FOREGOING ASSUMES THE CEASE-FIRE WILL HOLD, AND SADAT ESCAPE SERIOUS HUMILIATION. BUT IF THE CEASE-FIRE BREAKS DOWN AND THE EGYPTIANS ARE AGAIN BADLY DEFEATED, WE WILL BE HELD FULLY RESPONSIBLE. SAUDI PRESS HAS ALREADY SPOKEN ABOUT ISRAELI DEFEAT AND U.S., WITH ITS AID TO ISRAEL, SNATCHING VICTORY AWAY FROM ARABS. THESE ACCUSATIONS WILL PROBABLY BE MADE ANYWAY; WE MUST BE PREPARED TO ANSWER THEM AND TRY TO PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS PENDING MOVES ON THE POLITICAL FRONT. ANY GUIDANCE FROM DEPARTMENT ON THIS POINT WILL BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

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